

## Strike by cognomen

**Series:** [Cognomen's List of Things that Aren't Reptiles \[12\]](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Bowling Alley AU, Established Relationship, Monster Stories, Multi, Polyamory, just teens being teens

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Jim "Chief" Hopper (mention), Jonathan Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2018-03-07

**Updated:** 2018-03-07

**Packaged:** 2022-04-21 15:20:09

**Rating:** General Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 671

**Publisher:** [archiveofourown.org](http://archiveofourown.org)

**Summary:**

*February Ficlet Challenge, Day 12. Pairing: Steve/Johnathan/Nancy, Prompt: Bowling Alley Au*

“Everybody knows about the *thing* that lives under lane eight,” Steve is telling them, doing his best to sound spooky as he pushes the broom around the seating area, doing a half-assed job at getting all the pizza crusts and nacho chips off the floor before closing (and mopping) time.

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“Everybody knows about the *thing* that lives under lane eight,” Steve is telling them, doing his best to sound spooky as he pushes the broom around the seating area, doing a half-assed job at getting all the pizza crusts and nacho chips off the floor before closing (and mopping) time.

“Steve,” Nancy scolds with a very cute scowl that both guys notice. “There is *no* thing under lane eight.”

Jonathan leans on the shoe-rental counter across the way, and he trades a look with Steve that’s all conspiracy and egging each other on.

“You haven’t been back there, Nance,” Jonathan says, clearly playing along. “Sometimes the lights flicker and the ball retriever turns on by itself.”

Nancy rolls her eyes. “I didn’t think it was going to be like *this* when I talked Hopper into hiring you two.”

In truth, she hadn’t thought it would work. Then again, it’s not like Hopper knew about what was going on between all three of them. Who would guess? The rest of the town just sees them as three kids. Misfit victims of circumstance. Jobs were sort of limited around here. So what if a jock, a freak, and a nice girl all worked in the same place?

“What did you think?” Steve asks, emptying the dustpan into the trash.

“I thought it wouldn’t have to be me who went to tell the group on lane two that it’s fifteen minutes to close,” Nancy suggests, giving Jonathan an alluring pout that’s as much in play as their talk of horror beneath the lanes.

“Well, I guess since you did clean out the nacho machine,” Jonathan says, tossing the messy fringe of bangs out of his eyes, “I can take care of it.”

It gave him a chance to jump the shoe rental counter, anyway, and both Nancy and Steve watch him appreciatively. He stops to grin at both of them to show he knows that they did before he disappears down toward lanes one and two.

“Besides,” Nancy says, wiping down the counter with the antiseptic spray—step 10 of ‘ *Hoppers Evening Closing Chart* ’. “What kind of monster lives in a bowling alley?”

It’s like the setup for a joke from one of her little brother’s weird magazines.

“It doesn’t live in the bowling alley,” Steve says, getting inventive as he fills the mop bucket up. “It just *hunts* here.”

“You’re so lame, Steve,” Nancy laughs, but it’s affectionate. She likes his imagination, when it plays off Jonathan’s, even though the boys usually use their creativity for stupid boy things like inventing monsters.

“Lame?” Steve isn’t insulted, he knows she doesn’t mean it. “You didn’t feel that way yesterday, when I killed that spider in the supply closet for you.”

“Okay,” Jonathan returns, tossing the keys to Nancy. “Lane two is closed down. I checked the bathrooms and we’re empty for the night, so I locked up in front.”

“You mean we might get out by eight thirty?” Steve asks, perking up.

“Sure, if you ever finish mopping the floor,” Jonathan reminds.

The three of them fall into comfortable routine, doing a ball-and-shoe inventory as well as counting down the register and getting things ready for the league the next night.

A sound from somewhere in the mechanical guts under the alleys makes all three of them look up, idle chatter dying.

“Is that lane eight?” Jonathan asks. Nancy can’t tell if he’s joking.

“Oh come *on* guys,” Nancy says, half laughing and half scowling.

But the look on both the guy's faces is enough that all three of them abandon the free game of pinball that Hopper lets them have and hurry to turn off all the power to the lanes.

The sound stops but the darkness is almost worse. By wordless agreement, the three teenagers scramble out the door, laughing to cover their real fear and locking it behind them.

Maybe Nancy feels a little silly, but both the guys hold her hands on the way home, so the feeling fades quickly.